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ABSTRACT

Texas A&M University at College Station (A&M) and the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) employed portfolio assessment in their field-based principal preparation programs using the 21 performance domains of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. In a joint venture with the Bryan Independent School District, selected A&M students began the school year in their regular positions as teachers, but were given considerable latitude by their schools to become involved in field-based leadership experiences throughout the administrative internship program. In the "Educational Leadership UTA" Program, organized with the Dallas/Fort Worth public schools, interns left their teaching positions for one full calendar year, and engaged in three 12-week field-based internships, one each in elementary, middle, and high schools. Students from both universities maintained a log of daily activities during their field projects, and collected records, documents, and other artifacts that attested to the scope and quality of their performance. These sources, along with course papers, texts, and other relevant materials, became their portfolios. Results of the study indicated that the use of portfolio assessment in measuring the professional development of administrative interns gave them a focus for developing the skills most commonly identified as essential to campus-based administrative leadership success. Students reported that having the 21 performance dimensions around which to build their portfolios helped them move from the abstract idea of portfolio assessment to the concrete reality of exactly what to include to make their portfolio evaluation authentic and professionally meaningful. (ND)

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"PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS"

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PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Portfolio assessment for public school student learning has become a progressive research based evaluative tool. It has been used with less frequency on the college level and rarely in graduate environments. Yet two universities today are doing just that. The departments of Educational Administration at Texas A&M University at College Station and the University of Texas at Arlington are tying the utilization of portfolio assessment to their interns in school administration. Both universities have traditional campus based administrator preparation programs where student "interns" undertake field experiences under the direction of a practicing principal. Both universities are now advancing onward into the new arena of field-based principal preparation. In each instance portfolio assessment, utilizing the 21 performance domains of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, are providing the framework.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Texas A&M University has begun a joint venture with the Bryan Independent School District whereby selected students are participating in an alternative program for the development of school leaders. In the spring of 1994 a group of six teachers from the Bryan school district were admitted into an alternative program for the development of school leaders. This program was initiated on a pilot basis and was conducted in order to discover and refine those processes by which the total experiences of pre-service administrators may be shaped to best prepare them for moving into significant administrative roles.

Of the 33 teachers who applied, only 6 were selected for admission to the program. Selection was made by officials of the Bryan Independent School District in collaboration with faculty from Texas A&M's Department of Educational Administration. Each successful applicant demonstrated quality performance on the SRI, possessed a record of commitment to public education, and received the endorsement of his/her principal. The program, which culminates in attainment of Texas Mid-management Certification, has a number of salient characteristics:

1. A carefully selected cohort experience.
2. An individualized program for each student.
3. Early significant field experiences.
4. A careful blending of academic work and field experience.
5. Strong mentoring relationships.
6. A course of study based on the 21 Performance Domains identified by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration
7. Portfolio assessment.

From the beginning of her/his time in the program, the student maintains a log of daily activities and learnings. As field projects are conducted, the student collects records, documents, and other artifacts that will attest to the scope and quality of her/his performance. Records of key mentoring conferences are also maintained. These sources, along with course papers, tests, and other relevant materials, furnish materials for the student's portfolio.

The student's portfolio furnishes the material for ongoing informal assessments

and for two formal assessments in the course of the program. These formal assessments are performance by the Program Review Committee, a body made up of two university professors, two Bryan principals, and the Director of the alternative program, who functions as a non-voting member.

The first formal assessment, which is formative in nature, comes relatively early in the student's program. Using the performance indicators associated with NPBEA's 21 Domains as a guide, the student does a needs assessment and outlines projects and activities by which she/her will demonstrate proficiency in each of the domains during the course of the program. To do this she/he uses a rating sheet (See Figure 1) to identify priority for development in each of the domains and a matrix (See Figure 2) reflecting the 21 domains and the activities by which development will be achieved. Upon approval by the Program Review Committee, this matrix summarizes the student's individualized development plan which she/he will purse. It becomes a blueprint for subsequent activity in the program.

At the completion of the program the student again meets with the Program Review Committee for a summative assessment of her/his progress. If the completed program meets the criteria agreed upon at the time the program was established, with adjustments made to respond to changing conditions, the student is approved for certification.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

In January 1994 representatives from the University of Texas at Arlington began meeting with Central Office representatives from school districts in the Dallas/Fort Worth

metropolitan area. The purpose of the meetings were to determine what the ideal characteristics were that they were seeking in a principal. It was discovered that metroplex administrators unanimously wanted principals that were visionary thinkers, who were not afraid of doing things in a different manner, who were risk-rakers as well a problem solvers. They wanted principals who were good with people, who could turn red situations blue . After agreement was reached as to these characteristics, intense and reflective discussion took place as to determine how to build the ideal program where the theories of educational administration could be tied to these proficiencies resulting in new administrators that could enter the profession having the skills necessary to complete the job in a successful manner.

Through these and subsequent discussions, the "Educational Leadership UTA" program was developed. Under the "Educational Leadership UTA" plan, currently employed teachers in participating school districts would apply through their principals for allocated positions. Each participating district would have a prescribed number of slots available each year for these internships. The total number of interns participating from all the districts should not exceed 25 at one time. These 25 interns will move through the graduate program simultaneously in a cohort fashion. As in the A&M program, the "Educational Leadership UTA" program actively sought the inclusion of minority applicants. Each district is given the freedom of selecting the interns of their choice. There is no university intervention in the selection other than the interns must meet standard graduate school requirements for the University of Texas at Arlington.

Participating school districts in the UTA program agree to pay their selected

interns a minimum of 75% of their previous year's teacher salary as well as carry forth their benefits to subsidize their participation. Additional outside funding is actively pursued. The students must also contract with their districts that after their year's participation in "Educational Leadership UTA", in the event that they are not placed in an administrative position within their district for the following year, they must stay in employment of that district for a one year period. This agreement was reached to protect the financial investment of the districts in their employment. Thus students will be encouraged not to leave the district that sponsored them for one year after culmination of the "Educational Leadership UTA" program. While students in the A&M program began the school year in their regular positions as teachers, but were given considerable latitude by their schools to become involved in field-based leadership experiences throughout the program, conversely, the UTA interns will leave their teaching positions for one full calendar year. They will begin their "Educational Leadership UTA" experience during the summer, carry forth their field-based principal preparation on assigned campuses for the academic year, then culminate with a final one month summer seminar the following year. During the academic year the UTA interns will experience three twelve week field-based internships. One internship each will be spent in a selected elementary, middle, and high school. The UTA interns will also experience one two week district office internship experience to broaden their global perspective of administration. All administrative interns at UTA, whether in the "Educational Leadership UTA" program or the traditional graduate program, are assessed through portfolio assessment also utilizing the 21 performance domains of the National Policy Board for

Educational Administration. All UTA interns also utilize the same needs assessment format (See Figure 1) and evaluative procedures as described by Texas A&M.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Students from both universities maintain a log of daily activities and learning. As field projects are conducted, the student collects, records, documents, and other artifacts that will attest to the scope and quality of their performance. Records of key mentoring conferences ar also maintained. These sources, along with course papers, tests, and other relevant materials furnish materials for their portfolios. Feedback and interaction is strong between the intern, university professors, and the assigned mentor administrator in the UTA program. Through this mentoring process the individual strengths and weaknesses as determined by the initial needs assessment in both programs can be developed. Specific interventions can be cultivated and monitored. Because students in both programs are also concurrently enrolled for graduate credit in their respective universities, further professional development, theory, and discussion of its' application takes place. Feedback can be given in classes and seminars, as well as in problem solving, sharing and reflection with their peers in their cohorts. Formative and summative conferencing and strong mentoring are important aspects of both programs.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The use of portfolio assessment in measuring the professional development of administrative interns has been shown to give them a focus for developing the skills most commonly identified as essential to campus-based administrative leadership success. Students report having the 21 Performance Domains to build their portfolios around helps

them move from the abstract idea of portfolio assessment to the concrete reality of exactly what to include to make their portfolio evaluation authentic and professionally meaningful.

There are several items of importance to be gleaned from this study of the utilization of portfolios with administrative interns. First, most obviously, it proves that two universities can collaborate in qualitative as well as quantitative research utilizing different programmatic designs yet reaching the same results: portfolio assessment is a viable model for the appraisal of administrative interns. Both programs are resulting in the increased professional development of their interns whereby they have a tangible measure to tie their skills and proficiencies to concrete research in the importance of those same skills. Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Arlington have each made a commitment to the enhancement of the preparation programs of school administrators. Tying the students' assessment to their portfolio development is a logical way to enhance both their learning experience as well as their job related skills. Portfolio assessment ties theory to practice. It provides the students with a framework to continue their own professional development. It gives them a tool to build upon. Hopefully they will conclude that just as their portfolios are never truly complete, neither is their learning to become leaders of learners.